



## **DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD**



### **Inspection Report**

**Name of School:** St Helen's Catholic Primary School

**Local Authority:** Southend-on-Sea

**Unique Reference Number:** 115147

**Inspection Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> December 2011

**Reporting Inspectors:** Dr Michael Sutherland-Harper and  
Mr Derek Kelly

**This Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.**

Type of School: Primary  
School Category: Voluntary Aided  
Age range of pupils: 4 - 11  
Gender of pupils: Mixed  
Number on roll: 211  
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body  
Date of previous inspection: 2009

School Address:  
North Road  
Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex  
SSO 7AY  
Tel. No. 01702 343823  
Fax No. 01702 322498  
Chair of Governors: Mrs Mary Glen  
Headteacher: Mrs Elizabeth Mouchel

## **Introduction:**

The Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education (Schools) Act 2005 by two inspectors appointed by the Diocesan Bishop at the request of the Governing Body of the School.

The Inspectors acknowledge and are appreciative of the full support, co-operation and courtesy they enjoyed from the Governors, Headteacher, Staff and Pupils of the School both before and during the Inspection. The Inspectors wish to express their gratitude to all concerned.

## **The focus of the Section 48 Inspection was:**

- Classroom Religious Education
- The Catholic nature of the School through;
  1. Worship
  2. Links with the Catholic and wider community
- Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development

## **The Section 48 Report**

**St Helen's Catholic Primary School  
North Road  
Southend-on-Sea  
Essex  
SSO 7AY**

**Head Teacher: Mrs Elizabeth Mouchel**

**Date of Inspection: 9<sup>th</sup> December 2011**

## **Description of the School:**

St Helen's Catholic Primary School is a voluntary aided Catholic school situated close to the centre of Southend-on-Sea in the county of Essex and in the diocese of Brentwood. The school is an average-sized primary school. It serves the Catholic parish of Our Lady Help of Christians and St. Helen.

### **Record of Evidence Base:**

Two Diocesan Inspectors were in the school for the equivalent of two inspection days.

- The study of pre-inspection documentation including the Self-Evaluation Form/ Denominational Provision (SEF/DP).
- The observation of seven lessons.
- Participation in an assembly.
- Scrutiny of pupils' written work.
- Meetings with the Headteacher, Head of Religious Education (R.E.), Governor responsible for R.E., staff and the pupils.
- Observations of R.E. displays in the classrooms and around the school.

### **What the School does well:**

St. Helen's Catholic Primary School is an outstanding Catholic school. It has now been so for three successive inspections. The school serves an increasingly mobile and diverse community with many pupils at an early stage of learning English when they join the school. The school emphasizes the value of each individual in its vibrant and inclusive community, which is apparent from the striking displays all around the school and the welcome extended to the early morning breakfast club where pupils engaged happily with each other and the helpers. Getting to know each other as a person and Jesus as a part of one's life is central to the ethos of the school and was a focus of the recent visit from the Bishop. Parents and carers speak highly of the work of the school and about how happily their children come to school in the morning. Members of staff are always at the gates to greet the children and to communicate with parents and carers. The school has a very clear understanding of the community it serves and their different needs and works continually to develop its links with those it serves. Spirituality is at the heart of its work and is the strongest element in very good spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision. Pupils look after each other, have strong opinions but are also reflective and are respectful in their relationships with adults. Teaching and learning are good across the school, aided by the positive attitudes of the children. The headteacher gives clear direction to the work of the school and is ably supported by a committed staff team. As a result of her thorough planning and the strong work of her Head of Religious Education, who will shortly also be taking on the role of Deputy Head, the school has a strong capacity to improve. Governors are extremely supportive of the school and are developing the challenge they offer to help take the school forward. Close and effective parish links are regularly reviewed to help meet the needs of the school.

Religious Education (R.E.) is at the centre of the school's work. The Head of R.E. has well-devised plans for its development. The R.E. curriculum is based on the 'Here I Am' Religious Education programme of study, recommended by the Bishop of the Diocese; the programme is effectively delivered through a range of child-friendly resources and approaches adapted to the needs of the group, such as re-enactment of the shepherds' visit to Bethlehem by a group of the youngest children. Careful lesson planning and good

monitoring of progress ensure effective coverage of the R.E. curriculum although some opportunities for pupils to take the lead are missed, such as when the teacher reads passages which a pupil could deliver. Assessment is thorough with books well marked; however, guidance is not always forthcoming for the most able about how to improve further on work which is consistently good in order to take it to the highest levels. Good use is made of Information Communication Technology (ICT) to enhance delivery of R.E.; all aspects of delivery are carefully underpinned by prayer and reflection.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and take care to reinforce pupil efforts with good use of questioning and praise. Lessons are delivered at an appropriate level and take account of pupils' previous understanding. Learning is well reinforced by good support staff. Whole school themes are linked to Gospel values. Each class has a saint attached to help children personalise their faith journey and act as a reminder of how to behave. Behaviour in classes and throughout the school is good, in part because children have good opportunities to take the lead in assemblies and singing. Each class has an area which serves as a focal point for prayer and there is also a central prayer room. In addition, the travelling crib – a portable nativity scene – goes home to pupil abodes to remind families of the Christmas message and has been extremely popular as an initiative.

The school meets both the national and diocesan requirements for the allocation of curriculum time for taught R.E.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher places a strong emphasis on Gospel values as being at the centre of everything the school does. She has a clear vision of where she wants to take the school and is well supported in this by all staff. Governors regularly visit the school and their close links with the parish reinforce school-parish connections. The Head of R.E. has put together an effective R.E. action plan and is reviewing delivery in all areas. His planning is closely linked to the School Development Plan which means that the school has very good capacity for further improvement.

#### **What needs to be improved?**

- **Develop all teaching and learning in R.E. so that it becomes outstanding.**
- **Give pupils further assessment guidance about how to reach the highest levels in their R.E. work when the work produced is good but not outstanding.**
- **Continue outreach work to parents and carers.**

The Inspectors endorse the areas identified by the school for improvement in the Section 48 Self-Evaluation Form.

St Helen's Catholic Primary School is an outstanding Catholic school with a strong Catholic ethos. The school prepares its pupils well for the next stages of their life and learning journey.

